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Group: 1 (Form 1-2)
Topic: Baseball, Bald Eagle, U.S. President

The Bully

“Please turn down the sink on your side of the room,” I asked Haikal, a dark-skinned boy with thick eyebrows, messy hair, and whose breath always smelled like pork. “I also need to wash myself before prayer.”

He stared at me for a moment, then turned the knob to the left, decreasing my water pressure. “You mean like this?” he asked. His friends laughed.

My dad’s words played in my head, telling me to ignore the boys. In the heat of that moment, though, his advice didn’t matter to me. My blood was boiling with anger. “Exactly like that,” I responded. “It should help clean up your poop face.”

Haikal turned to me, then threw water in my face. “Here, Iskandar. Wash yourself,” he mocked, lifting his hand to scrub my cheeks. I jumped back, then slapped him. He tackled me. The ablution room erupted in cheers and laughter as we wrestled on the floor. “Stop this!” our P.E. teacher, Cikgu, screamed as he ran in to break up the fight.

My dad’s face was red with embarrassment after our talk with the principal. “You need to control your temper, Iskandar,” he lectured me on the car ride home. I sat quietly, staring out the window. I had tried explaining my problems with Haikal to him before, but he never understood. Instead, he repeated the same catch phrases over and over. “Just ignore him. It doesn’t matter. He’s not worth your breath.”

Right before we reached our house, my dad pointed out the window at a small restaurant. “Do you want to go eat some cendol?” he asked. I smiled and nodded, and he turned into the parking lot. We chose a table under the sun, and I sat down while he stood in line to order. I scanned the crowd of people while I waited, and noticed a tall, black man sitting next to me.

“Excuse me,” I said as I tapped his shoulder. He glanced over. “Are you Obama?” I asked.

“Of course. Who else do I look like?” he chuckled.

“Wow! This is amazing!” I exclaimed in delight. “What are you doing here?”

He pointed to his bowl of kolo mee. “Eating,” he replied. “What about you?”

“I just got out of school, so my dad and I are getting cendol.”

“That sounds delicious,” he said as he slurped up his noodles. “What did you learn in class today?”

“Hmm.” I put my hand on my chin as I thought. “I learned that my classmate, Haikal, is really stupid.”

He snorted. “Why do you say that?”

I explained the situation to him, and he nodded his head in understanding. “Tell me,” he said to me after I finished my story, “Do you know what baseball is?”

“I’ve seen The Sandlot,” I replied. He grinned, and pulled a worn-out ball from his pocket.

“What does that say?” he asked as he flipped it over, revealing a signature.

“Babe Ruth.”

“And who is Babe Ruth?”

“He’s the greatest baseball player that ever lived,” I replied. “The Great Bambino.” Obama smiled, and handed me the ball.

“That’s not actually Babe Ruth’s signature,” he told me. “My dad wrote that when I was about your age. My old school bully has the real one.”

“How?” I asked.

“I brought it to school one day to show my friends. Right before lunch, I went to use the bathroom, and stupidly left it on my desk. When I came back, the ball was gone. Harold, the boy who sat next to me, smiled and asked if I was missing something. I yelled at him to give it back, but he just laughed, so I punched him. We were sent to the principal’s office while my teacher searched his backpack and cubbyhole, but she couldn’t find it.”

“Your dad must’ve been angry,” I said as I handed his ball back.

“Probably, but I was too busy crying to notice that. I must’ve said sorry at least a hundred times on the car ride home. I locked myself in my room for the rest of the day, refusing to come out. Around 8 PM, he knocked on my door, came in, and handed me this ball. ‘Forgive that boy,’ he told me. ‘I know you’re upset, son, but he’s not worth the effort. It’s just a ball.’”

“Then what?” I asked.

“Then nothing. The boy kept the ball.”

“What kind of story is that?” I said, upset. “I don’t get the point of it.”

The president laughed. “You have years left, and bad things are guaranteed to happen. When they do, you have a choice: let those things make you upset, or let them go.” As he finished those words, a bald eagle flew over the ball and snatched it from his hands. We both stared in awe as it glided away. I looked over at the man and frowned, but he only shrugged. “It’s just a ball,” he repeated.

“Iskandar,” my dad said as he approached the table. “Why are you bothering this man?”

“It’s Obama, dad!” I exclaimed. “I’ve been talking to Obama.”

“Alamak! That isn’t Obama!” He apologized to the man, then we ate our cendol.

Next week came, and I was stuck in the ablution room with Haikal and his friends again. Like last time, I asked him to turn down the sink on his side, and once again he refused. I

imagined myself punching him so hard that his nose broke, and the fantasy started boiling my blood. But I took a breath instead, and let it go. After all, it was just a ball.